

## [An Air-Minded Family]

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### AN AIR-MINDED FAMILY

I asked the taxi driver if he knew just where Mrs. Edwards lived? "Yes mam." At the same time stopping in front of a one-story red brick house, with the woodwork painted white. Hyacinths, forsythia and jonquils were in full bloom. These flowers [bordered?] the spacious lawn that was green with grass, low shrubbery surrounded the house. [?] There was a lattice fence with an opening just large enough for a car to go through, screened the back yard from the front, Like the front yard name was flowers in full bloom. low shrubbery close to the house and garage. A [washpot?] turned upside down, a [?] play house, and parts of a [?] demolished airplane in the garage.

I knocked on the door, and a voice within called to me. "Just open the door and come in. I am too lazy to get up." I entered the livingroom, there sat Mrs. Edwards dressing a small black haired, blue eyed little girl about four years old. "Do have a chair, if I don't dress Sissie before I get up she won't let me get her dressed. I haven't made a fire in the

## Library of Congress

furnace and the house is none too warm. The maid hasn't come yet and everything is topsy-turvy."

As she talked about this and that I glanced around the room. It was evident that a member the family worked for an electric company. There were three lamps in this room. One on the radio, another on a marble top antique table and a floor lamp by a governor Winthrop desk. Several antique chairs, modern three piece 2 livingroom suit book case filled with books on aeronautics, two mirrors and several pictures on the wall. A clock, and pictures of her two grown sons on the mantel as well as a picture of her deceased husband who was a well known aviator, and one of her oldest daughter on the desk. A rug with a flowered of pink roses in block design and criss-cross curtains with blue ball trimmings completed the furnishings in this room.

She had finished dressing the child turned out the light, came over near the window where I was sitting on the red upholstered divan. Picked up a sweater and began darning it. "My boys won't wear these sweaters because there is a touch of red on them. It isn't necessary to do this mending this morning, but I thought I might as well be doing something while I am talking. It is such a bad day I can't get out and sell my cosmetics. My battery is no good on my car so I will have to wait another day. When I go out I take the two small children with me and leave them in the car while I make my calls selling my product. I also sell Christmas cards in season. My children fuss with me because I get out and work, but I have worked all my life and know what it takes to live on. Too I don't fell right to sit down and let my older children take care of me and the ones who are not large enough to work. So after the negro finishes her work and dinner is over I put the children in the car take my cosmetic kit and try to do my bit. Some days I do real well and some days I get so discouraged I feel like giving up but I can't.

"But what is it you want me to tell you I have just talked and talked and you have come for my life history. Why would anybody 3 pick me out of all people? You know a mother of ten children and nine living don't have time to think about what has happened and afraid

## Library of Congress

to think what might take place after all I have been through. I have had a child and my husband killed. I am praying I won't have to go through it again. We never know what is to happen to us in this life.

"My young days were spent in Greene County at Siloam, Georgia. I was born in Madison County out here at Neese. People in Madison County could sell their land and buy land for half price in Greene County in those days. So my people sold their land and bought a farm near Siloam and lived in the little village that is the way people did then. I was 12 years old when I went there to live, and perhaps my happiest days as a young girl were spent in that settlement.

"It was a little odd the way I started to work. There was a man who ran a general merchandise store, his daughter who was my best friend helped him in his business. On the day my friend was to marry another man the invitations had been issued and everything set for the wedding, she ran away and married someone else. A few days after that I met the girl's father on the street, he told me his wife wanted to see me right away. Well I was scared green, I thought sure, she blamed me for the girl running away and marrying someone else. That woman was a captain. Instead of that she wanted me to work in the store in her daughter's place. I accepted the job and received \$6.00 a month. I worked from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock on Saturday night. In fact I worked twelve hours a day. I was crazy about my job, I worked and took music lessons too. I remember I had an argument with my family they wanted the money for something else and I wanted to continue my music lessons and did it, also bought my own clothes as well as things for the house.

"My brother got a job with the Athens Railway and Electric Company. He was here about a year when I decided to write a leading store in this town for a job as they were the only people I had ever heard of in business. My people laughed at me and said. 'Why, don't you know they won't give you a job. There are so many people in Athens they won't even answer your letter.' "Anyway I wrote them and right away I received a letter from them

## Library of Congress

telling me the next time I came to town to come by to see them. I wrote them and right away I received a letter from them telling me to see them next time I came to town to come by to see them. I lost no time coming to 'Athens on going to the store, applying for the job they told me the one who employed the girls were out sick and for me to come back the following Monday. As I was leaving the store I asked them to save the job for me I would be back when they told me too. As I walked out of the store the man to whom I had been talking to came to the door saying to me. 'Come back when we told you too and go to work.'

"I received the big amount of \$15 a month. I worked there about three years before I married and worked [off?] and on about two years afterward. I worked as long as I could before my first child was born. As soon as I could I went back and worked until Jr. came along, then I gave up and decided there was no need trying.

"My father and mother came to town with me to live. He went back and forth to Greene County to [superintend?] his farms and saw 5 mill. Mother kept house, and looked after the children, cows chickens and etc.

"When I came here to live, I was engaged to a man studying for the Presbyterian Ministry at Clemson college in South Carolina. I have had so many things said to me that turned out to be true, it frightens me for anyone to make any predictions. This man to whom I was engaged to didn't want me to come to Athens. He said you wont be there three weeks before you will meet someone you will like better than you do me. I told him that was impossible, because I was in love with him and very much interested in my music. Sure enough I hadn't been here but a short time before I met Bert.

"One day I was leaving the store going to lunch. A boy I knew was standing out in front he called to me and said. 'Wait a minute I have something to tell you.' Bert started down the street, 'come back here pal I want you to meet the new girl in the store, she hasn't been in Athens long.' From that time on my friend kept asking me for a date to go automobile

## Library of Congress

riding. I didn't know girls went riding at night. I told my mother, she told me it would be no harm if there was another couple along. So when my friend, Bert and another girl came to my house I didn't know I was to be with Bert until he got there. From that time on we had dates regular. I told him I was engaged to someone else. He told me he didn't care, he was in south Carolina and he here, and he was going to beat his time, and he did. He was like that he started to build airplanes and wouldn't quit.

"After we married we lived with his mother two years then his father and mother gave Bert a building lot just out side of the city 6 limits. We built a nice house, I thought I was all set with a well on the back porch, and kerosene lamps. With a nice garden, chickens, cows and I even had a hog or two. It wasn't long before Bert put an electric pump in the well. After the children got large enough to go to school it was too expensive to send so many to school in town. So I began to beg my husband lets build in town. He told me, 'All right, but as sure as we do one of the children will be killed sure.' Still I insisted so after living in the country 13 years we built this house and moved to town. Sure enough we had only been here 3 years when the child next to the baby than was run over in the yard and died as the results of that injury. He developed pneumonia and only lived a short time. We have been living here ten years.

"My husband's real business was in the garage business. He had the first filling station in Athens. You know every man has a hobby, his was with airplanes when he closed his garage for the day instead of playing golf or working in the yard or garden he tinkered with his planes, my brothers just sat down. He begun building airplanes about two years before we married.

"He made a short flight in 1909, in 1910 he write to a land company asking them to let him attend one of their land sales and take people to ride to draw a large crowd. They wrote him they would take the matter up with him and they were sure it could be made profitable for the company as well as himself, but they never did anything about it.

## Library of Congress

"The whole family is crazy on the subject of airplanes. However, when he had a smash-up his family blamed me for not discouraging him. He was doing this before we married, how could I change him then.

"There was no airport here to try out his planes, so he took them out to an open field to try them out. That was when he first tried to fly them, he smashed them up hauled them in and started all over again. He just took it up as a hobby and only studied it a short time in a private school in Virginia when my second girl was a baby. He took up this hobby a short time before the Wright Brothers flew theirs.

"Bert was never a person to talk about himself. He always brought the newspaper clippings home for me to read. Several days ago Dr. Reid told me that he and Mr. Hugh Rowe went out with Bert at two o'clock one morning to fly his first plane.

"Back when my oldest son was 14 some friends took him on a trip to Washington, D. C. Mrs J. S. Grey of Chevy Chase, Maryland was writing a book called 'UP' aviation of yesterday and today. It never occurred to me to mention it to my son to visit her. So when he got to Washington he decided to look her up. She was very much interested in him and wrote a page and a half about him in her book.

"He made his first solo flight in Atlanta at an air show when he was 13 years old. That was the first time I had ever seen him fly and he handled it just like his daddy. Then I look at these children of 13 it frightens me to think of the things we let him do. As far as we know he was the youngest person to fly a plane in this country or abroad.

8

"I remember there was a mob in Atlanta at the air show. It was about dark when I started home one of my little boys was missing. I looked everywhere in that crowd. Finally I learned that he had flown home with his daddy in the plane, and slept all the way. Yesterday Mother Edwards was spending the day with me. The planes were flying

## Library of Congress

overhead. I said to her, 'my little boys are dying to get out to the airport and get in one of those planes.' She said, 'I don't blame them, I would too if I was out there.'

"Bert taught lots of boys to fly. It was \$10.00 an hour, he gave one man lessons to refresh his memory on flying. I had to get up when one of my babies were two weeks old and get Bert's breakfast so he could get out to the field by six o'clock to take him up and teach him two hours before he went to his garage at eight. That man run his bill up to \$80 and never paid a cent of it. He was later killed in New York. He ran into a high tension wire while flying a passenger plane over the city.

"Oh, I do wish the weather would clear up so I could get out and sell my cosmetics. You know it's my disposition to work and I sold them during my hisband's life time to help out. I don't make much but now, every penny I make goes a long ways.

Mrs. Edwards daughter who holds a responsible position with reliable company in Athens came in: "Good morning," her mother told her what I was doing, "That's fine," she said: "Mother I want my lunch by twelve o'clock and while you fix it I will make out some reports." She went to the desk and lay her books on it. Mrs. Edwards got up to excuse herself while she went to the kitchen, saying. "Now, you don't have to go just stay and have lunch with 9 us." I declined. "Now, don't go there's no need and after lunch we can finish what you want to know. It wont take me but a few minutes as I cooked quite a bit yesterday, I was expecting a house full of company they didn't come so I am just warming it over. You just make your self at home. I have the most convenient way of cooking in the world."

I followed her to the kitchen there was an electric stove, refrigator, percolator and several other electric appliances sitting around, a kitchen cabinet, rug on the floor and curtains at the windows. "While the dinner is warming I want you to see the bed my daughter had made. A woman had the lumber left from a suite she had made and sold it to her. I think it cost \$20 finished." I went into the bedroom from the kitchen. Was this ever a breakfast

## Library of Congress

room I asked? "No, this is the only way so I had about the building of this house? 'I told my husband how in the name of the Lord could I run through the kitchen, diningroom and livingroom to get to the bedrooms to see about one of the children if one of them were sick.' "So this door was cut."

In the room was a slender four post bed, vanity dresser painted green a few scatter rugs on the floor and a pin-up lamp still burning over the bed. This room opens into a small narrow hall. A bath room opens into this hall. The floor is tile with tub and other conveniences. Another bedroom opens into this hall, which is evidently the boys room as clothing, shoes, book and airpleans are scattered all over the room. There was two white iron beds, dresser, bed side table, pin-up lamp and nice blue bed spreads on the beds. Mrs. 10 Edwards took me into another room which she says: "This is my room and the babies, I don't have no other place for this desk my husband used in his office. I had several students staying with me for eight months I let them have my room and the boys. I have a nice large room in the basement and we went down there to sleep. There is a shower too. I would like to have some boarders now, but the boys don't want them. If I did than I could give up selling my cosmetics and devote all my time at home." There was a walnut suite in her room. "Everything is so torn up this morning I am ashamed for you to see my house. The maid came, but she didn't stay long she is a settled woman and has to look after her affairs on Monday when I pay her off."

"Mother?" asked the girl. "Is lunch ready I have got to eat and get back on the job." "Yes, all I have to do is to put it on the table." I was writing and she went to the kitchen. In a few minutes she announced that lunch was ready. "Now, I have set a plate for you, and there is no reason why you can't have lunch with us." Again I declined the invitation saying I would wait until they had finished to complete the interview. Miss Edwards, said: "Oh, come on and eat with us." So I went to the diningroom with her and had lunch. The suite in this room was much too large for the size of the room. Consisting of a large buffet, table, chairs, an old victrola, doll carriage and a large book case filled with books on aeronautics, sat back of the door. A floor lamp was placed between the windows overlooking the street.



## Library of Congress

Criss-cross curtains with blue ball trimmings was at the windows, a few pictures on the wall and a green rug on the floor. We had Grace at the table by 11 Miss Edwards and the lunch consisted of spinach, turnips, mashed potatoes, cornbread, biscuit, banana salad, cake and coffee also butter milk. "Now, help your self." Invited my hostess, "Don't be afraid to eat for there is plenty for all. I had cube steaks and gravy yesterday for lunch, so I didn't think we needed meat today. Anyway vegetables are much better for people."

Lunch was over and we sat chatting then an airplane came zooming over head, everyone jumped from the table some ran to the window while others ran out on the front porch. After the commotion was over Miss Edwards came back into the room saying: "Gee it was flying low." Did you ever fly a plane I asked? "I never soloed, but I did take lessons from my father when I was about fourteen or fifteen." Why didn't you continue your lessons, I asked? "Well the depression came on and father couldn't afford to take his planes up unless he was getting paid for it so I had to discontinue them." Putting on her hat and coat she was gone.

Mrs. Edwards came in and began: "These children have pulled out every book their daddy has on airplanes. At night I have to pick my way to bed over model airplanes, and find books all over the bed and even under their pillows where they have fallen to sleep with them.

"Bert felt like he was a failure, but of course he wasn't. He went to New York about twenty years ago and bought a flying boat that had been shipped back here from France. I was so busy with babies I didn't know what he was doing. He provided for his family what he thought was necessary. So He had saved a little money of 12 which I knew nothing about, and bought the boat with it. He advertised it for sale for \$100.000. A man who was an aviator saw the ad, wrote him, saying. 'Lets get together on the boat you have offered it too cheap, and rebuild it and make some money.' They spent three weeks putting it in shape, then they took it to New Jersey to fly it. The man who was an Englishman. He took it up and had to make a force landing in a small place where there were lots of trees.

## Library of Congress

When they tried to take it up again they didn't have room enough to get it over the trees they had a smash up. That \$100.000 was gone, so they brought it back to Athens and made a land plane out of it. They made quite a bit of money [on?] out of it. That was back when people didn't mind paying \$15 to take just a short ride.

"Bert had a very dignified man helping him at the air field. One day several people went out for a ride in the party was a very prim woman. That was when women wore long dresses. After the helmets, safety belts and strappings were adjusted on the people in the plane. The helper noticed the woman hadn't pulled her goggles down. He said to her, 'Pull your goggles down, she looked at him but made no attempt to pulled them down. He told her several times, after the door to the plane was closed he tapped on the window and yelled. 'I say lady, pull your goggles down.' To this she meekly pulled up her long skirt to her knees and pulled her garters down around her ankles. That brought a burst of laughter from everyone who saw it. That man would get out of the way at the mention of a woman's garters.

"The money my husband made on his planes he always put back in them, the money he supported his family on was made in the garage 13 business and filling station. He had so many smash-ups it took everything he realized from them to put them back in shape again. Once he was going to Florida to an air show when they got to Macon they stopped for gas. They had hardly got out the sight of town when he had a smash-up. He always did think the people at the filling station put cheap gas in his plane. When he was building his hanger, there came a terrible storm, it took one of the post up out of the ground and sat it down in the middle of his plane as if some person had done it. Every time he had an accident, people would say to me. 'Well, I guess Bert wont fly any more after this.' I would tell him what they said. His answer was; 'I never quit.'

"The most honest thing ever happen to him was; he had a man helping him rebuild planes, one of them he connected the control wires backwards and when they took it up to try it our it worked in reverse. That smashed, the man got out of the plane and walked off the

## Library of Congress

field without saying a word. Several years after that Bert was in Atlanta and saw him on the street. He said to my husband: 'I want you to know when I smashed up that plane I was broke, now I am making good and I want to pay for half of the damages done.' My husband took the money as he was badly in need of cash at that time.

"About fifteen years ago Bert built a light plane of his own design and sold it. Then he built another one, my son flew it all the time and my husband was flying it when he had his last smash-up. Before his death he had lost everything we had. He often said one thing he would never do that was mortgage our home, but he did, and now we are doing everything we can to save it. He had closed his garage and gotten a job at \$35 a week he thought with that coming in each week and what he made on his planes we could do very well he had only drawn one pay check. At one time we were worth \$40,000, now it is a struggle to keep our heads above the water. Just a few nights before he was killed he couldn't sleep. Mother Edwards said, 'It was his guardian angel warning him that something was going to happen.' "No, the Wright Brothers had no effect on him he thought everybody was responsible for their own failure or success, he never had one penny donated toward his enterprise.

"His death has had no effect on us as to our disbelief in aviation we are as interested in it now as we were in his life time. I am sure if Bert had known that was his last flight he would have been happy to know he died or was killed in what he loved best no matter how far he had to fall.

"His death left us without a cent. He did have two insurance policies however, he had borrowed money on both of them. One policy had a clause in it that the policy was no good in case he was killed in an airplane accident. The other one was taken out before that clause was added in policies. To be exact I only received \$500. and \$18. which was just enough to put him away decent.

## Library of Congress

"I have two sons in college they work in the day time and go to Tech at night. My oldest son is taking aeronautical engineering, and the other one is taking a plain freshman course at the same college. I have two girls who have finished college both have good jobs. One here and the other one is teaching school at Tate, Georgia.

14

"One of my little boys told me not so long ago. 'mama, did you know one day I went up with daddy to chase the clouds and got lost?' "No, I told him." "Well we did, we didn't have much gas and was afraid we would have a smash-up. I am sure we were over Comer, Georgia so we turned around and came back safe. Do you know why we weren't hurt or run out of gas?" "No, I said." "Well it was because after daddy told me that we were lost in the clouds and didn't have much gas. I began to pray and prayed until we landed. When we got out of the place I said thank you God for letting us get back safe." "Thats fine, 'I told him, but you children are going to drive us to the poor house, spending every cent you get on model airplanes. A few days after that the baby said to my oldest daughter." 'did you know we are going to move?' 'No,' she said, 'Well we are.' 'Where ? ' she asked 'to the poor house.' 'How are we going?' 'In an airplane.' answered the baby.

"I know what I have told you isn't interesting, but it is our life we are all wild about aviation. But when you need some consmetics please get them from me that is where my few pennies comes from now." I thanked her for the story, and started to leave." "Do come back again." There is my daughter she went to get a check cashed so I can pay my bille." The telephone rang she closed the door. The girl was getting out of the car, belonging to her company. "Come back again." Thanks I said, and left the Edward's home and the air minded family.